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**We cannot be  
sure of having  
something to  
*live for* unless  
we are willing  
to *die for it*.**  
~ Che Guevara



**14 Jun 1928 <::><::><::> 9 Oct 1967**

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# Che Guevara

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che\\_Guevara](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che_Guevara)

**Ernesto "Che" Guevara** (Latin American Spanish: [ˈtʃe yeˈβaɾa];<sup>[3]</sup> 14 June 1928<sup>[1]</sup> – 9 October 1967) was an Argentine [Marxist revolutionary](#), physician, author, [guerrilla](#) leader, diplomat, and [military theorist](#). A major figure of the [Cuban Revolution](#), his stylized visage has become a ubiquitous [countercultural](#) symbol of rebellion and global insignia [in popular culture](#).<sup>[4]</sup>

As a young medical student, Guevara traveled throughout South America and was appalled by the poverty, hunger, and disease he witnessed.<sup>[5][6]</sup> His burgeoning desire to help overturn what he saw as the capitalist exploitation of Latin America by the United States prompted his involvement in Guatemala's social reforms under President [Jacobo Árbenz](#), whose eventual [CIA-assisted overthrow](#) at the behest of the [United Fruit Company](#) solidified Guevara's political ideology.<sup>[5]</sup> Later in Mexico City, Guevara met [Raúl](#) and [Fidel Castro](#), joined their [26th of July Movement](#), and sailed to Cuba aboard the yacht [Granma](#) with the intention of overthrowing US-backed dictator [Fulgencio Batista](#).<sup>[7]</sup> Guevara soon rose to prominence among the [insurgents](#), was promoted to second-in-command, and played a pivotal role in the two-year guerrilla campaign that deposed the Batista regime.<sup>[8]</sup>

After the Cuban Revolution, Guevara played key roles in the new government. These included reviewing the appeals and firing squads for those convicted as war criminals during the [revolutionary tribunals](#),<sup>[9]</sup> instituting [agrarian land reform](#) as [minister of industries](#), helping spearhead a successful [nationwide literacy campaign](#), serving as both president of the [National Bank](#) and instructional director for [Cuba's armed forces](#), and traversing the globe as a diplomat on behalf of Cuban socialism. Such positions also allowed him to play a central role in training the militia forces who repelled the [Bay of Pigs Invasion](#),<sup>[10]</sup> and bringing

Soviet [nuclear-armed ballistic missiles](#) to Cuba, which preceded the 1962 [Cuban Missile Crisis](#).<sup>[11]</sup> Additionally, Guevara was a prolific writer and diarist, composing a seminal [guerrilla warfare manual](#), along with a [best-selling memoir](#) about his youthful continental motorcycle journey. His experiences and studying of [Marxism–Leninism](#) led him to posit that the [Third World's underdevelopment](#) and [dependence](#) was an intrinsic result of [imperialism](#), [neocolonialism](#), and [monopoly capitalism](#), with the only remedies being [proletarian internationalism](#) and [world revolution](#).<sup>[12][13]</sup> Guevara left Cuba in 1965 to foment continental revolutions across both Africa and South America,<sup>[14]</sup> first unsuccessfully [in Congo-Kinshasa](#) and later [in Bolivia](#), where he was captured by CIA-assisted Bolivian forces and [summarily executed](#).<sup>[15]</sup>

Guevara remains both a revered and reviled historical figure, polarized in the collective imagination in a multitude of [biographies, memoirs, essays, documentaries, songs, and films](#). As a result of his perceived martyrdom, poetic invocations for [class struggle](#), and desire to create the consciousness of a "new man" driven by moral rather than material incentives,<sup>[16]</sup> Guevara has evolved into a quintessential icon of various [leftist](#) movements. In contrast, his critics on the [political right](#) accuse him of promoting authoritarianism and endorsing violence against his political opponents. Despite disagreements on [his legacy](#), *Time* named him one of the [100 most influential people of the 20th century](#),<sup>[17]</sup> while an [Alberto Korda](#) photograph of him, titled [Guerrillero Heroico](#), was cited by the [Maryland Institute College of Art](#) as "the [most famous photograph](#) in the world".<sup>[18]</sup>



<b>President</b>	<a href="#">Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado</a>
<b>Prime Minister</b>	<a href="#">Fidel Castro</a>
<b>Preceded by</b>	<i>Office established</i>
<b>Succeeded by</b>	Joel Domenech Benítez
<b>President of the <a href="#">National Bank of Cuba</a></b>	
<b>In office</b>	
26 November 1959 – 23 February 1961	
<b>Preceded by</b>	<a href="#">Felipe Pazos</a>
<b>Succeeded by</b>	Raúl Cepero Bonilla
<b>Personal details</b>	
<b>Born</b>	Ernesto Guevara <p>14 June 1928<sup>[1]</sup>  <a href="#">Rosario</a>, Santa Fe, Argentina</p>
<b>Died</b>	9 October 1967 (aged 39) <a href="#">La Higuera</a> , Santa Cruz, Bolivia
<b>Manner of death</b>	<a href="#">Execution by shooting</a>
<b>Resting place</b>	<a href="#">Che Guevara Mausoleum</a> , Santa Clara, Cuba
<b>Citizenship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Argentina</li> <li>Cuba</li> </ul>
<b>Political party</b>	<a href="#">M-26-7</a> (1955–1962) <a href="#">PURSC</a> (1962–1965)
<b>Spouses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <a href="#">Hilda Gadea</a> <p>(m. 1955; div. 1959)</p> </li> <li> <a href="#">Aleida March</a> <p>(m. 1959)</p> </li> </ul>
<b>Children</b>	5, including <a href="#">Aleida</a>
<b><a href="#">Alma mater</a></b>	<a href="#">University of Buenos Aires</a>
<b>Occupation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Author</li> <li>diplomat</li> <li><a href="#">guerrilla</a></li> <li>physician</li> </ul>
<b>Known for</b>	<a href="#">Guevarism</a>
<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Nicknames</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Che</a></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fuser</i></li> </ul>
Military service	
<b>Allegiance</b>	<a href="#">Republic of Cuba</a> <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Branch/service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces</a> (FAR)</li> <li>• <a href="#">National Liberation Army of Bolivia</a></li> </ul>
<b>Years of service</b>	1955–1967
<b>Rank</b>	<i>Comandante</i>
<b>Unit</b>	<a href="#">26th of July Movement</a>
<b>Commands</b>	<a href="#">Commanding officer</a> , FAR
<b>Battles/wars</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Cuban Revolution</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Attack on El Uvero</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Operation Verano</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Battle of Las Mercedes</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Battle of Santa Clara</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">Bay of Pigs Invasion</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Cuban Missile Crisis</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Simba rebellion</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Operation South</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">Ñancahuazú Guerrilla</a> 🦠</li> </ul>

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# Che Guevara

## A False Idol for Revolutionaries

[https://arsof-history.org/articles/v4n4\\_false\\_idol\\_page\\_1.html](https://arsof-history.org/articles/v4n4_false_idol_page_1.html)

In the mid-1960s, Ernesto "Che" Guevara de la Serna, was a clear threat to American foreign policy in Latin America. His role in Cuba's Revolution, his outspoken criticism of the United States, and his propensity for armed Communist insurgencies in the Western Hemisphere, made him one of Washington's top intelligence and military targets. "This asthmatic ... who never went to military school or owned a brass button had a greater influence on inter-American military policies than any single man since the end of Josef Stalin." Che's part in establishing the first Communist government in Latin America was legendary in the region. In essence, the U.S. Government was concerned by, not just Che the man, but what he

proselytized on insurgency and instability. He was the Osama Bin Laden of the 1960s.



**Che**

**Guevara's parents, Celia de la Serna and Ernesto Guevara Lynch, visited him in Havana shortly after the revolution succeeded.**

Che's image has transcended reality to that of a romantic hero. But ask any Cuban exile in the United States today and they will say that Che was simply a ruthless Communist revolutionary. Best known for his brutality in Cuba, he was deeply involved in unsuccessful insurgencies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Bolivia. While not a thorough account of his life, this article summarizes Che's youth, idealism, and the revolutionary path that led him to Bolivia.



**Che Guevara (left) and Fidel Castro (right) were the architects of the Cuban Revolution. Guevara's propensity for exporting the revolution throughout Latin American made him a dangerous enemy to democracies in the region.**

Ernesto was born on 14 May 1928 in Rosario, Argentina, to Ernesto Guevara Lynch and Celia de la Serna. The first of five children, he was raised in an upper middle class family. His father was related to one of South America's most established families. While he squandered an inheritance, his wife,



Celia, had her own and an estate that provided a small yearly income. Ernesto's upbringing was bohemian; as a boy he was free to do as he wished. But he was born with a serious, lingering ailment.

From the age of two Ernesto suffered from severe asthma, forcing the family to live in a dry region. His father complained that "each day we found ourselves more at the mercy of that damned sickness." The asthma made the often-bedridden Ernesto a voracious reader. He was also determined to lead an active life.

Ernesto played sports and engaged in daredevil antics to impress his friends. Although of slight build, he was especially good at rugby. His bohemian eccentricities earned him nicknames, the most unflattering being "*Chanchó*" (pig), because Ernesto did not bathe regularly and wore unwashed clothes for weeks. Despite his nonconformity, Guevara chose to study medicine at the University of Buenos Aires and explore the country.



**Ernesto Guevara's travels showed him the disparity of the living standards between the urban middle class and the rural poor, fostered his Pan-Americanism.**

On his trips Guevara noticed the vast differences in living standards between the rural population and his social class. These forays into the countryside manifested a feeling of pan-Americanism, a desire to help the poor, and reinforced his hatred of the landed aristocracy in South America and the U.S. Despite being bourgeois, he held them responsible for Latin America's oppressed indigenous population. The adventure that most influenced the 24-year-old Ernesto began in January 1952. Partnered with Alberto Granado, he traveled through Argentina, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, and the United States. After nine months of travel and discovery, Ernesto was infused with a newfound sense of

direction. He returned to Buenos Aires and completed his medical studies in April 1953.



**Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz's socialist policies caused his ouster. Guevara, who witnessed it firsthand, was greatly influenced by the 1954 coup.**

The newly minted doctor once again took to the open road. After observing firsthand, the results of the 1952 Bolivian Revolution in La Paz, he left for Guatemala to support the socialist president, a former Army officer named Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán. There, Ernesto met his future wife, Hilda Gadea and got the nickname, "Che," from Cuban political exile Antonio "Nico" López who made fun of him for constantly using the Argentine expression *che* [hey!]. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) orchestrated overthrow of President Arbenz in 1954 had a profound effect on Che Guevara. Afterwards, he looked back on Guatemala as a revolution that could have succeeded if those in power had been more forceful.

Arbenz's populism, especially land reform and cooperation with Socialists, attracted international attention. In 1954, two percent of Guatemala's population owned 72 percent of the arable land. Since only 12 percent of that land was being used annually, Arbenz wanted to redistribute the rest. This did not please the powerful and influential U.S.-based United Fruit Company (UFC), which was Guatemala's largest landowner. In the midst of a "Red Scare," Washington responded to the UFC's pleas for help, in part because America was not keen on a left-leaning government in the Western Hemisphere. Thus, the CIA trained a force in Nicaragua to overthrow Arbenz.

On 18 June 1954, nearly 500 men commanded by Carlos Castillo Armas crossed the border in four groups. Although the CIA-trained rebels were dealt severe blows, the revolt of the Guatemalan Army enabled final success. Arbenz was forced into exile. Those suspected of Socialist sympathies were arrested. Che took refuge inside the Argentine Embassy before fleeing to Mexico City.



Che's revolutionary colleagues from Guatemala joined him there. Níco López introduced him to Fidel Castro, whom Che thought was "intelligent, very sure of himself and of extraordinary audacity; I think there is a mutual sympathy between us." When Castro invited him to join the 26th of July Movement, Che accepted.

Castro's movement was the cause Che had been seeking. The group began to covertly train under the tutelage of Spanish Civil War veteran Alberto Bayo. His paramilitary regimen included revolutionary war theory, physical conditioning, hand-to-hand combat, and marksmanship. Castro did not delay his return to Cuba.

On 25 November 1956, 82 guerrillas boarded the *Granma*, an old, leaky, cabin cruiser loaded down with weapons and supplies bound for Cuba. After a rough voyage, the small force landed on 2 December at Playa Las Coloradas. Their first contact with Batista's forces on 5 December was disastrous. The Army attacked the guerrillas while they were resting in a sugar cane field. Surprised, the confused group did not put up an organized defense, and many fled through the dense sugar cane. Those who tried to fight were either killed or captured. Che, Castro, and Castro's brother Raúl, were among the few that managed to escape.



**The Sierra Maestras are the highest mountains in Cuba. The rugged, inaccessible terrain allowed Castro's 26th of July Movement a secure base from which to build support. This later became key in Che's theories on guerrilla warfare.**

The twenty-plus survivors congregated in the safety of the Sierra Maestra Mountains. Reunited, they began recruiting anti-Batista farmers. Once the urban underground cells of the 26th of July Movement discovered that there were *Granma* survivors, arms, supplies, and money trickled into the remote mountain camps. Hit and run attacks on small outlying garrisons garnered

more. As the number of successful attacks grew, the group gained sympathy throughout Cuba. Castro capitalized on this by granting an exclusive interview to Herbert Matthews of the *New York Times*.

A sympathetic Matthews greatly exaggerated the number of guerrillas to "thousands." "General Batista cannot possibly hope to suppress the Castro revolt." The interview showed that Havana's claims that Castro was dead were untrue. Recruits and support poured into the mountain retreats. By surviving and sticking with Castro, the Argentine proved his loyalty and dedication.

Che's fervent belief in the revolution set him apart and added to his credibility among the Cubans as a *Granma* veteran. Although recruited as a doctor, his leadership and organizational skills prompted Castro to promote him to *Comandante* and give him command of one of the two rebel columns [at that time, Castro was the only other *Comandante*]. Fidel needed his skills in the brutal struggle.

Desperate to save his regime, Batista sent large forces into the mountains. While the rebels rarely killed enlisted soldiers who surrendered, captured insurgents expected little mercy. Castro's men were brutal with deserters. Poor living conditions made that a serious threat. Those caught were summarily tried and executed. The war quickly spread beyond the mountains.

The 26th of July Movement expanded guerrilla operations to assassinating prominent government supporters such as police and military officers. Batista launched "Operation Verano," into the Sierra Maestra in late June 1958 in response. The six-week offensive was a disaster. It was such a large psychological victory that Castro expanded combat operations into the lowlands. Che took his column down to build alliances with other resistance groups.

Under pressure from the loosely united guerrilla groups, Batista's forces gave ground in late December 1958. Che's column secured numerous towns and defeated several garrison elements. The insurgency achieved success after capturing Santa Clara. Joined by Camilo Cienfuegos's column, the united guerrillas approached the city. Their 300-350 troops faced 3,500 of Batista's thoroughly demoralized soldiers.

The rebels secured the city after a series of brief engagements. When the Army fled, the way to the capital Havana, was open. Less than twelve hours after the fall of Santa Clara, Batista's government collapsed. He escaped to the Dominican Republic on 1 January 1959. The victorious rebels rolled into Havana unopposed and took control of government buildings. Che installed himself in La Cabaña, an 18th Century fortress turned prison where he presided over "revolutionary tribunals" of "war criminals" until June 1959.



**Construction of the La Cabaña fortress began in 1763. At the time of the Cuban Revolution it was being used as a prison. For much of 1959, Che oversaw the trials and executions of "enemies of the revolution" here.**

Several thousand people were tried at La Cabaña. They were either sentenced to prison or executed. Former government officials, police, and army personnel who had served Batista were rounded up. Luis O. Rodriguez, a former platoon sergeant that fought in the Sierra Maestra, was arrested at home. Rodriguez described these dreadful times.

"things were very disorganized ... every night they would come in with a list ... if you were called in [late at night/early morning] it would mean that you were going to trial. They would tell you not to carry anything with you. [This was] contrary to if they called your name during the day and would ask you to bring your belongings if you had anything. You knew you would be transferred ... But if you were called during the night it was a different thing. You knew that your life was almost gone ... After they called the names for about an hour or so nothing happened. Then, all of a sudden you heard the discharge of several rifles and after a few seconds ... the single shots [coup de grâce], sometimes one, sometimes two ... even four. All this time we saw Che ... calling us criminals ... he would say 'all you guys will end up the same way. You deserve it.' We were wondering why is this guy here, he was not even a Cuban ... He was very arrogant and cold."



Guevara

publicly trashed his enemies. His speeches angered the United States, and later, the Soviet Union.

The trials shook the militaries of Latin America because large numbers of officers were summarily executed. The Cuban revolutionaries posed a threat to the professional military social class in the region. Bolstered by the success, Che began making bellicose public statements regarding insurgency and revolution.

On 27 January 1959 Che made his *Social Projections of the Rebel Army* speech. It was an ominous view of the future.



Sugar was Cuba's main export and source of hard currency. Che set an example by volunteering a large portion of his free time "to the revolution," by cutting sugar cane, or working on the docks.



"The revolution is not limited to the Cuban nation because it has touched the conscience of (Latin) America and seriously alerted the enemies of our peoples. The revolution has put the Latin American tyrants on guard because these are the enemies of popular regimes ... the victory against the dictatorship is not a passing one but becomes the first step to the victory of (Latin) America."

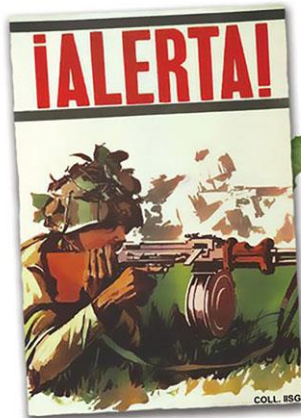
Cuba had already begun to surreptitiously support revolutionary movements in the region, forcing nearby countries to fight internal threats. At the same time, the U.S. pressured Cuba because Castro was moving to nationalize American-owned economic assets.

Domestically, Castro needed to build stability in Cuba. The executions at La Cabaña were stopped because they were attracting too much world attention. Che was sent on a three-month world tour ostensibly to garner support for the new revolutionary government and to promote sugar sales, Cuba's major export. When he returned, Guevara was kept busy as president of the National bank and manager of nationalized foreign assets. But, Che still managed to find time to broker stronger ties with the Soviet Union.

On 3 January 1961, the United States broke diplomatic ties with Cuba because of its appropriation of U.S.-owned properties without compensation and its turn to Socialism. The Congressional quota of Cuban sugar purchased by the U.S. was abolished. That was the final impetus for Havana to move into the Soviet sphere. Russian small arms and tanks followed. Che deserved the lion's share of credit for this Soviet Cuban relationship. As Minister of Industries, Che forged Cuba's economic policy—despite lacking a background in business, industry, finance or government. CIA analysts assessed that this forced Castro afterwards to dedicate an inordinate amount of time to "finding remedies for the disastrous effects of the regime's early policies—largely those engineered by Guevara." Castro's "revolutionary honeymoon" was about to be upset.



**When Havana sided with the Soviet Union, it was supplied with large amounts of Russian equipment, such as this T-34/85 tank. Che was the main architect of the Cuban-Soviet relationship.**



By 1961, Cuba was prepared to deal with a U.S.-backed invasion force, as the above period poster declares. The Soviet-supplied and trained military dealt the U.S.-sponsored Brigade 2506 a catastrophic defeat at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961. The map on the right shows important sites in the Cuban revolution.



The Bay of Pigs invasion by the Brigade 2506 was over in days. Che did not take part in combating the United States-trained force, but later used the defeat to taunt Washington.

With President Dwight D. Eisenhower's approval, the CIA trained hundreds of anti-Castro Cubans to invade the island. The Brigade 2506 launched its disastrous invasion on 17 April 1961 at the Bay of Pigs (*Bahía de Cochinos*). The anticipated popular uprising did not occur. The newly elected president, John F. Kennedy, did not authorize U.S. military intervention and Castro's forces savagely counter-attacked. Four days later, the fighting had ended and more than 1,100 were taken prisoner. As the commander of forces in western Cuba, Che Guevara did not participate, but still taunted the Americans over the episode.

In August, while attending an Organization of American States (OAS) conference in Uruguay, Che requested a meeting with U.S. delegate Richard Goodwin. The diplomat told President Kennedy that Che "wanted to thank us very much for the invasion—that it had been a great political victory ... and transformed them from an aggrieved little country to an equal."





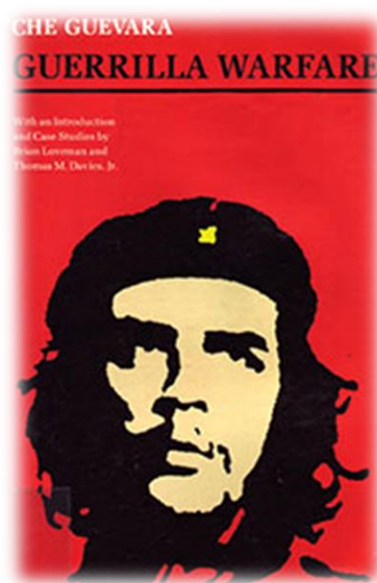
Several Latin American countries contributed to the U.S.-led blockade during the Cuban Missile Crisis. They realized that their countries were also within range of the Soviet Union's nuclear missiles.



Photographs taken by an American U-2 reconnaissance aircraft revealed the presence of Soviet nuclear weapons. This prompted the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Tensions between Havana and Washington worsened during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. Although President Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev averted the crisis, Che felt Soviet prestige was weakened. Che revealed how radical he was a few weeks afterwards by telling British journalist Sam Russell that had Cuba controlled the missiles; he would have fired them off. The U.S. had no choice but to consider Guevara a grave threat.

Che continued his ranting on 11 December 1964 in the United Nations, when he lambasted the U.S. for its "imperialist" treatment of Latin America and the inequality shown its own minorities. He said, "How can those who do this consider themselves guardians of freedom?" Then surprisingly, Che outraged the Soviet Union in Algiers on 25 March 1965 when he called Moscow an accomplice "of imperialist exploitation," for its trade policies with the developing world. After becoming somewhat of an embarrassment to Havana, he privately renounced his rank, positions, and Cuban citizenship to Fidel Castro in order to foment revolution elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> Castro later released the letter. The unveiling insinuated that Guevara should not return to Cuba lest he have proof that his idealism and *foco* revolutionary theory worked. "Che's whereabouts became the world's best-kept, most guessed-at secret," until his death in Bolivia in October 1967.



He had already tried to sponsor *focos* in Latin America—most notably in Argentina—but the regime had been alerted and the insurgency quelled before it got started. Che then turned to Africa. There, the newly independent Democratic Republic of the Congo (from Belgium) had an ongoing internal rebellion that was receiving support from the Soviet Union and other Communist nations. To Che, the Congo "was one of the most important fields of battle," and an ideal place to test his *foco* theory.



**Che left Cuba in 1965 and his whereabouts were unknown until he was killed in Bolivia in 1967. From April to November 1965, Guevara tried to coax success from a revolution in the Congo, but failed miserably.**

"This is a history of a failure" was the first line that Che wrote in the preface to his Congo diary. From April to November 1965, Che pushed his *foco* concepts, but was received indifferently. He blamed his lack of success on the African rebel leaders and troops, describing them as "corrupted by inactivity," lacking "revolutionary awareness," and "lazy and undisciplined." They were "the poorest example of a fighter that I have ever come across." But, he also learned that he had to be totally in charge of his next venture. This predilection proved fatal in Bolivia. Che went into seclusion to prepare for his next, hopefully better, expedition.

Many U.S. intelligence analysts thought that Guevara was dead. Still, because of his stature, his proven support for armed Communist revolution, and connection to Fidel Castro, Washington had to be prepared to deal with him if/when he reappeared. Communist-insurgencies inspired by Che Guevara had to be eliminated. It was finally done in Bolivia.

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## Cuban Revolution

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Cuban-Revolution>

**Cuban Revolution**, armed uprising in Cuba that overthrew the government of Fulgencio Batista on January 1, 1959. The revolution's leader, Fidel Castro, went on to rule Cuba from 1959 to 2008.



## Prelude to the revolution

### U.S. rule and the creation of the Cuban Republic

As a result of the [Spanish-American War](#), control of [Cuba](#) passed from [Spain](#) to the [United States](#) on January 1, 1899, and it was governed by direct U.S. military administration until May 20, 1902. During these years, Cubans filled more public offices than they had under Spanish rule, and much was done for [public works](#), sanitation, and education. Most notable of all, [yellow fever](#) was [eradicated](#) where it had been [endemic](#) for centuries.

A [constitutional](#) convention met at [Havana](#) from November 5, 1900, to February 21, 1901. The constitution that was adopted contained certain provisions known as the [Platt Amendment](#); these were imposed by the U.S. as a condition for accepting the constitution and were approved by Cuba on June 12, 1901. By these provisions Cuba promised not to incur debts its current revenues could not bear, to continue the sanitary administration undertaken by the U.S. [military government](#), to lease [naval stations](#) to the U.S., and, if necessary, to permit the U.S. to intervene in order to preserve Cuban independence and a government adequate to protect life and property.



Tomás Estrada Palma Tomás Estrada Palma, c. 1902.

In May 1902 [Tomás Estrada Palma](#) became the first president of the new republic, and material prosperity came to certain segments of the Cuban population. This was due to a [reciprocal](#) trade treaty, requested by the outgoing U.S. authorities, that permitted more Cuban [sugar](#) to enter the U.S. Sugar exports would dominate the Cuban economy throughout the first half of the 20th century, and the U.S. was Cuba's chief trading partner.

## Independence, instability, and continued U.S. intervention

Estrada Palma's administration attempted to [implement](#) progressive measures, but it was plagued by instability. His party, the [Conservatives](#) (later known as the Moderates), emerged victorious in the elections of December 1905, but the opposition Liberals accused the government of rigging the vote. This charge, along with widespread pension fraud and the failure to bring about proposed governmental reforms, triggered a revolution in July 1906. The insurrection spread rapidly, and Estrada Palma requested intervention by the U.S., which sent commissioners to mediate. The mediation failed, Estrada Palma resigned, and on September 29, 1906, U.S. Pres. [Theodore Roosevelt](#) named his secretary of war, [William Howard Taft](#), governor of Cuba. Taft proclaimed that he would lead a provisional government to last "long enough to restore order and peace and public confidence." Government was maintained under the Cuban flag, regular constitutional forms remained outwardly unchanged, and the insurrectionists promptly disbanded. U.S. administration [ceased](#) on January 28, 1909, and the republic was inaugurated a second time. U.S. troops were withdrawn on April 1, 1909.

Three presidents governed Cuba from 1909 to 1925 with little distinction and much corruption. They were [José Miguel Gómez](#) (1909–13), Mario García Menocal (1913–21), and Alfredo Zayas y Alfonso (1921–25). During this period the U.S. interfered twice in Cuba and threatened to [intervene](#) several more times. During the Gómez administration the country prospered, but charges of corruption in the government rose. The government was accused of giving few offices to Afro-Cubans and also of favouring those who had supported the Spanish cause in the [war for independence](#). Protests by Afro-Cubans against a law prohibiting political organization by [race](#) or [religion](#) led to a bloody government crackdown that claimed the lives of thousands. The Liberal party split, and in the election of 1912 the [Conservative](#) candidate, Menocal, won.

Menocal's administration oversaw much material progress, but with prosperity came new charges of government corruption, including accusations of nepotism. Menocal won re-election in 1916 by employing [fraud](#) and [violence](#), and, as a result, war broke out against him in February 1917. The rebels had hoped for intervention by the U.S., but it was too occupied with the situation in [Europe](#), and Menocal was able to put down the rebellion. Menocal's government declared war on [Germany](#) on April 7, 1917, the day after the U.S. entered [World War I](#).



**Gerardo Machado y MoralesGerardo Machado y Morales, 1931.**

Until 1919 Cuba enjoyed phenomenal prosperity, thanks to the high price of sugar. By 1920, however, a severe financial crisis had struck the country, and, despite a [moratorium](#), many banks and other business concerns went [bankrupt](#). Zayas introduced financial reforms and was given a \$50 million loan by the U.S. in January 1923. The economic situation rapidly improved, but charges of corruption against Zayas intensified, and revolts broke out against him, led in part by war veterans. When Zayas tried to get himself renominated, he ran into stiff opposition from his own party. He therefore made a pact with the Liberal candidate, Gen. [Gerardo Machado y Morales](#), against Menocal, who ran as the Conservative candidate in the election of 1924.

Machado was elected overwhelmingly and assumed office on May 20, 1925. He was to become Cuba's first full-fledged [dictator](#). Pledged to a program of reform, he made good only a few of his promises during his first term. With the beginning of his second term, in 1928, a rule of terror began. [Martial law](#) was proclaimed, and Congress allowed him to suspend [freedom of speech](#), press, and assembly. Political opposition, allayed by an [adroit](#) distribution of patronage in 1928, revived against Machado as the [economic depression](#) of the early 1930s hit Cuba. An attempt to stabilize the price of sugar, always the mainstay of Cuba's economy, failed, and no substantial relief came from a public-works program. As the opposition increased, Machado adopted increasingly harsher methods against it. Cuban exiles fled to the U.S., and, as violence intensified, the U.S. offered to mediate. An amnesty was declared, and constitutional and political reforms were promised. With the economic crisis deepening and with Machado apparently determined to stay in office in spite of promises to resign, the army forced him to flee the country in August 1933.



## The rule of Fulgencio Batista

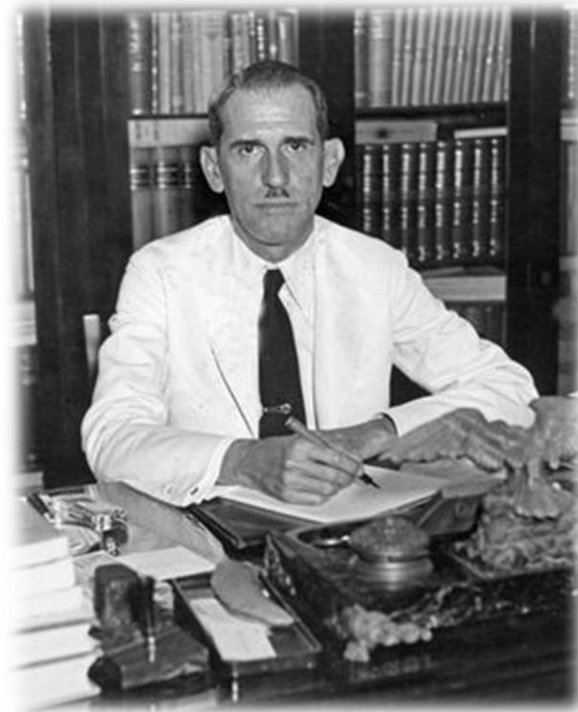


**Fulgencio Batista Fulgencio Batista (left), with Gen. Malin Craig, chief of staff of the U.S. Army, in Washington, D.C., November 10, 1938.**

Cuba had many presidents in the following years, but they were usually made and unmade by Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar, a sergeant who gained control of the army at the time of Machado's downfall. Carlos Manuel de Céspedes y Quesada, son of Cuban revolutionary leader [Carlos Manuel de Céspedes](#), was the first president to serve on a provisional basis. He set aside the constitution and tried to bring about modest reforms, but critics feared that he was too closely allied to the U.S. He was overthrown after just a few months, and [Ramón Grau San Martín](#) was installed in his place. Grau San Martín's attempts at reform were also short-lived, and his four months in office were characterized by bloody strife. A military [junta](#), headed by Batista, then conferred the presidency on Col. Carlos Mendieta, who seemed to have the approval of most factions. The U.S. and other countries granted him prompt recognition.

Under the [auspices](#) of U.S. Pres. [Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy](#), a treaty was concluded in June 1934 that [abrogated](#) the [Platt Amendment](#). That document, which had been issued to preserve peace, had had the opposite effect, as discontented factions had frequently risen against Cuban governments in order to bring about U.S. intervention. It also had been used by such leaders as Zayas to get the people to support them as champions of Cuban liberty against U.S. aggression.

Disorder and strikes continued, but Mendieta and his chief of staff, Batista, used dictatorial measures and postponed elections until December 1935. Batista continued to rule Cuba through two presidents—Jose Barnet y Vinageras (December 1935–May 1936) and Federico Laredo Brú (December 1936–October 1940). Miguel Mariano Gómez y [Arias](#) was elected in May 1936 but served only to December.



**Ramón Grau San Martín**Ramón Grau San Martín, 1944.

In 1940, Batista, then a colonel, undertook his own candidacy and defeated Grau San Martín. During his presidential term, 1940–44, Cuba entered [World War II](#) on the side of the [Allies](#) and established diplomatic relations with the [Soviet Union](#). Batista's candidate, Carlos Saladrigas y Zayas, ran in 1944 but was defeated by Grau San Martín, and Batista soon left the country. Grau San Martín's administration began with much emphasis on "political house cleaning" but failed to achieve any kind of concrete reform.

[Carlos Prío Socarrás](#) became president in 1948, but his ambitious domestic agenda stalled in the face of economic troubles and government corruption.

Batista, a candidate for the June 1952 election, anticipating his defeat, overthrew the government in March without bloodshed. He closed [Congress](#) and called for elections in 1954. He was elected president without opposition for a four-year term beginning February 24, 1955. He reinstated the 1940 constitution, which contained many liberal pro-labour reforms, and tried to return the country to normalcy, but strong opposition developed against him. Among the primary concerns of large landowners was the [Sugar Act](#) of 1956, U.S. legislation that sharply curtailed Cuban sugar imports to the benefit of domestic producers. With Cuban sugar exports facing an uncertain future, support for Batista within both the government and the influential agriculture industry virtually collapsed. Militant anti-Batista elements denied the validity of the 1955 election and organized a campaign of harassment and sabotage in the provinces. Chief among these groups was the [26th of July Movement](#) under the leadership of the [charismatic](#) revolutionary leader Fidel Castro.

### **The rise of [Castro](#) and the outbreak of revolution**



**Fidel Castro**

Castro was educated in [Santiago de Cuba](#) and [Havana](#), and, while he was still a student, he participated in revolutionary activities throughout [Latin America](#). He received his law degree from the University of Havana in 1950, and, after graduating, he began practicing law. In 1952 he was a candidate for the Cuban People's Party, but Batista's coup preempted the election, and Castro soon settled on an [alternative](#) means for challenging the dictatorship. On July 26, 1953, he led around 160 men in a desperate and unsuccessful raid on a [Santiago](#) army barracks. He had hoped that the attack would ignite a general uprising against Batista, but most of the attackers were killed and Castro and his brother [Raúl](#) were arrested and

imprisoned. In 1955 the Castro brothers received [amnesty](#) and were released, whereupon Fidel went to [Mexico](#), where he began organizing an invading force of Cuban exiles.

### **Castro returns to Cuba**



**Che Guevara**

Accompanied by a band of 81 men on board the [yacht](#) *Granma*, Castro landed in eastern [Cuba](#) on December 2, 1956, but most of the force was quickly killed or captured. Among the dozen men who escaped were the Castro brothers and [Ernesto \("Che"\) Guevara](#). This small band then began a [guerrilla](#) campaign against Batista in the [Sierra Maestra](#) mountains and took the name [26th of July Movement](#) to [commemorate](#) the 1953 attack.

From the date of Castro's landing, Cuba was in a state of virtual civil [war](#). On March 13, 1957, the Revolutionary Directorate (Directorio Revolucionario), a group of insurrectionists largely composed of students, launched a bloody and unsuccessful attack on the presidential palace in Havana. Dozens were reported killed in the fighting. Serious disturbances were [intermittent](#) throughout [Santiago de Cuba](#) and central Cuba. Trade unionists attempted to provoke a general [strike](#), but support among labour leaders collapsed after the government announced that anyone participating in the strike would be refused re-employment elsewhere. On August 1, 1957, Batista suspended [constitutional](#) guarantees such as freedom of assembly and freedom of expression. A little more than a month

later, on September 4, he attempted to reassure the public that the presidential election would take place as scheduled in June 1958. An uprising in [Cienfuegos](#) on September 5, 1957, saw that city's naval station fall into the hands of rebel officers. More than 100 people were killed when government forces retook the city.



**Fulgencio Batista** Fulgencio Batista, c. 1955.

### **1958, the decisive year**

The [revolution](#) continued into 1958 with sporadic raids and considerable destruction of property, as the unrest began to seriously disrupt the Cuban economy. Sugar mills and [plantations](#) were burned, bombings in Havana depressed the [tourist](#) trade, and rebel activity in Oriente province [hampered](#) the [mining](#) industry. Responding to the unrest, the United States imposed an arms [embargo](#) on Cuba in mid-March and suspended delivery of nearly 2,000 [Garand rifles](#) to the Cuban government. Batista took advantage of the violence to call for a postponement of the June 1958 presidential election, and on March 26 the elections were rescheduled for November 3. [Communist](#) groups led by Juan Marinello responded by calling for a [general strike](#) on April 9. Although the strike did not materialize, the communists continued to assert their role as a major force in the opposition.

Believing that the failure of the strike represented a decline in popular support for the rebels, Batista launched a major military effort against Castro's forces. In July government troops advanced to positions in the



foothills of the Sierra Maestra. They were quickly thrown back by 26th of July Movement fighters, however, and by early August the offensive had stalled completely. Cuban army forces retreated to their strongholds in government-held territory.

For his part, Castro issued a number of proclamations during the year, ranging from appeals for a general strike to death threats against all candidates for political office. Among Castro's exploits was the [kidnapping](#) of 10 American and 2 Canadian civilians from the Freeport Sulphur company mining headquarters in northeast Cuba on June 26. The following day, 28 U.S. sailors were kidnapped from a bus outside the [Guantánamo Bay](#) naval base. Several other U.S. citizens were seized, but the anger aroused in the United States over these actions led Castro to release his prisoners within the following week. On July 28, [U.S. Marines](#) from Guantánamo Bay were [deployed](#) to protect the base's [water supply](#). Raúl Castro, whose rebel forces controlled the area around the base, voiced his opposition to the move, and on August 1 Batista dispatched Cuban troops to guard the water supply so the Marines could be withdrawn.

As the rescheduled election date approached, three main candidates tried to appeal to Cuban voters: Andrés Rivero Agüero, Batista's chosen successor; Carlos Márquez Sterling, who was supported by some moderate groups; and former president Ramón Grau [San Martín](#), the candidate of the Cuban Revolutionary Party. Castro threatened violence against both candidates and voters in the days before the election, and, when Cubans went to the polls on November 3, the rebel-controlled provinces of Oriente and Las Villas saw negligible turnout. When the results of the election were announced, however, it was clear that massive fraud had occurred. The moderate Márquez Sterling was awarded victory in the four provinces where [legitimate](#) voting had taken place, but Rivero Agüero was declared the overall winner, because of unchecked ballot-stuffing in Oriente and Las Villas. Had Márquez Sterling won the election, the Cuban Revolution might have taken a very different course. Instead, Batista's interference virtually assured the collapse of his regime.

## **The fall of Batista**

The weeks following the election saw support for Batista melt away. Although much of the army remained loyal to him, its [combat effectiveness](#) had been seriously compromised, because of [ammunition](#) shortages resulting from the American arms embargo. Castro's forces, which for years had waged a successful guerrilla campaign, could now match government troops in pitched battle and often faced them with superior equipment obtained from foreign sources. On December 27, 1958, a rebel force under [Che Guevara](#) routed the garrison in [Santa Clara](#), the capital of Las Villas province, and captured an armoured train filled with arms and ammunition that were desperately needed by government forces.



Batista, seeing that his position was [untenable](#), relinquished the presidency in the early morning hours of January 1, 1959. At dawn, he fled to the [Dominican Republic](#), despite the fact that he had been on bad terms with the government of that country for several years. On August 20, 1959, he flew to the Portuguese island of [Madeira](#); he would spend the rest of his life in exile in [Portugal](#).

Batista had handed over power to the commander in chief of the army, Gen. Eulogio Cantillo, who established a provisional government headed by Chief [Justice](#) Carlos M. Piedra, Gen. José E. Pedraza, and himself. Castro, who had proclaimed the victory of the revolution from the balcony of the Santiago de Cuba city hall, refused to deal with the junta, and on January 3 Guevara led the first rebel column into Havana, unopposed. Castro himself did not arrive in Havana until January 8, when a new provisional government was established with Manuel Urrutia Lleó as president and Castro as [prime minister](#).

### **Castro triumph**

[Indiscriminate arrests](#), acts of [torture](#), and [executions](#) began almost at once throughout Cuba. By May 15, 1959, some 600 people linked to the Batista government had been put to death by revolutionary courts. One of the first significant acts of the new regime was to confer upon the Argentinian Guevara the status of native-born Cuban, thus making him eligible for any government position, including the presidency. Guevara would spend the following months presiding over military prisons, directing [courts-martial](#), and making extensive tours of [Asia](#), [North Africa](#), and the [Soviet Union](#).

Although Castro had repeatedly called for immediate, honest general elections, it became clear that, once he had achieved power, such elections would be postponed indefinitely. The early days of his administration were marked by triumphal visits to neighbouring countries, and, at an appearance in [Caracas](#), [Venezuela](#), he declared that the proletarian revolution was being realized in the Americas. The United States had been among the first countries to recognize the legitimacy of Castro's government, but [tensions](#) between Washington and Havana were growing, and in April 1959 Castro embarked on an 11-day tour of the U.S. The 33-year-old revolutionary was greeted as a celebrity, and among his stops were meetings with Vice Pres. [Richard M. Nixon](#) and acting secretary of state Christian Herter. Castro was reported to have said that Cuba would remain neutral in any contest between the West and the [Soviet bloc](#), but, when asked about the accuracy of the quote, he slyly dissembled, claiming that Cuba was poor and had neither troops nor arms.

Castro's goodwill mission failed to elicit any financial help from the United States, and he soon turned to [expropriation](#), forced lending, new and heavier [taxation](#), and [exchange control](#). A program of expropriation of all

landholdings exceeding 1,000 acres (4 square km), regardless of the owner's nationality, was written into an "agrarian reform" decree [promulgated](#) on June 4, 1959, as part of the Cuban constitution. The National Agrarian Reform Institute was established to pay for all lands taken over with 20-year [bonds](#), inconvertible until maturity, paying 4.5 percent interest, with payments derived only from tax revenues. The United States filed a formal protest on June 11, and five members of Castro's cabinet resigned the following day. The Cuban government responded that the law was a final and [sovereign](#) decision and that its conditions would not be modified.

Dissension within the administration because of the worsening clash with the United States led Castro to tender his resignation as prime minister on July 17. He declared that he could not work with Urrutia, whom he characterized as a traitor. A proletarian demonstration to demand Castro's return had the intended effect of giving him a popular [mandate](#) to continue resisting what he characterized as "foreign imperialism." Urrutia, forced to resign and placed under arrest, was replaced by Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado as president.

This consolidation of power was necessary because Castro's position was far from secure during his first year. Cuba's economy was in tatters, with [unemployment](#) soaring and private [investment](#) plummeting. The situation was made worse by falling prices on [sugar](#), [tobacco](#), and other staples of the Cuban export market. Defections were commonplace. The chief of Castro's Revolutionary Air Force, Maj. Pedro Luis Díaz Lanz, fled to the U.S. in late June. Each high-profile defection was offset by the [alleged](#) discovery of an anti-revolutionary [conspiracy](#). By October 1959, however, genuine uprisings were occurring in western Cuba as well as the central provinces.



**Cuban leader Fidel Castro and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev making their way through a crowd, 1960.**

Little came of these early efforts to remove Castro from power, but they marked the beginning of what Cuban authorities later characterized as more than 600 attempts—a figure that was impossible to independently verify—to overthrow or assassinate him. The conclusion of a trade pact with the Soviet Union in February 1960 signalled the deepening of Cuba's relationship with Moscow, and in September Castro travelled to the [United Nations](#), where he publicly embraced Soviet premier [Nikita Khrushchev](#) and delivered a four-and-a-half-hour speech [denouncing](#) the United States. The continued confiscation of foreign assets continued over U.S. protests, and by the end of 1960 most economic activity between Cuba and the United States had ceased. On January 3, 1961, in one of his final acts in office, U.S. Pres. [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) severed diplomatic relations with Havana. A little more than three months later, on April 17, 1961, some 1,500 Cuban exiles who had been financed and directed by the U.S. [Central Intelligence Agency](#) staged an abortive [invasion at the Bay of Pigs](#). The invasion, crushed by the Cuban military, was the last large-scale overt attempt to overthrow the Castro regime.

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# Revolutionary Wisdom

## Quotes of Che Guevara

<https://www.blinkist.com/magazine/posts/top-che-guevara-quotes-inspire-change>

Explore the profound wisdom of Che Guevara through his revolutionary quotes. Immerse yourself in his powerful words on political activism and discover famous socialist quotes that continue to inspire generations.

In a world that often feels stagnant and in need of change, it is important to seek inspiration from those who have fought for revolution and social justice. Che Guevara, the iconic Argentine Marxist revolutionary, is known for his unwavering commitment to creating a more equitable society. His powerful words continue to resonate with activists and change-makers around the world. In this article, we have compiled the top 10 Che Guevara quotes that inspire change and challenge the status quo. These quotes will not only ignite a fire within you but also remind you of the importance of fighting for a better

world. Get ready to be inspired and motivated by the revolutionary wisdom of Che Guevara.

Youth should learn to think and act as a mass. It is criminal to think as individuals! <<< Che Guevara

This line emphasizes the importance of collective thinking and action, particularly among the youth. It suggests that individualistic thinking can be detrimental and even criminal, as it hinders the progress and unity of society. By encouraging young people to think and act as a mass, the quote promotes the idea of working together towards common goals and shared values. It highlights the power of collective action in bringing about positive change and shaping a better future for all.

The negro has maintained his racial purity by his well-known habit of avoiding baths. <<< Che Guevara

This quote emphasizes a harmful stereotype that has perpetuated racist beliefs and discrimination. It falsely suggests that African Americans have maintained their racial purity by avoiding cleanliness and personal hygiene. Such a statement is not only offensive but also perpetuates harmful stereotypes that have been used to justify racial inequality and discrimination. It is important to challenge and reject such racist narratives, recognizing that personal hygiene has no correlation with racial purity or worth.

I don't care if I fall as long as someone else picks up my gun and keeps on shooting. <<< Che Guevara

This quote highlights the unwavering determination and selflessness of an individual who is willing to sacrifice their own well-being for the greater cause. It conveys a sense of resilience and commitment to a mission or purpose, emphasizing the importance of perseverance and the willingness to continue fighting even in the face of personal setbacks. This quote encourages us to prioritize the collective goal over individual success, inspiring us to support and uplift one another in the pursuit of a common objective.

I would rather die standing up to live life on my knees. <<< Che Guevara

This quote highlights the courage and determination of individuals who choose to stand up for what they believe in, even in the face of adversity. It emphasizes the importance

of living a life of integrity and standing firm in one's convictions, rather than succumbing to fear or compromising one's values. This quote encourages us to be bold and unwavering in our pursuit of justice, freedom, and truth, even if it means facing difficult challenges or sacrificing comfort. It serves as a reminder that a life lived with conviction and courage is far more meaningful than a life lived in submission or compromise.

**To accomplish much you must first lose everything.**  
**<<< Che Guevara**

Once again, Che Guevara delivers a thought-provoking statement that challenges conventional notions of success and achievement. This quote suggests that in order to achieve great things, one must be willing to let go of attachments and possessions. It emphasizes the importance of sacrifice and the willingness to take risks in pursuit of one's goals. By letting go of material possessions and embracing a mindset of detachment, individuals can focus on what truly matters and channel their energy towards meaningful accomplishments. This quote serves as a reminder that true success often requires letting go of the familiar and stepping into the unknown.

**If you have the capacity to tremble with indignation every time that an injustice is committed in the world, then we are comrades. <<< Che Guevara**

This quote, from Che Guevara, captures the essence of his revolutionary spirit and his belief in the power of collective action. It emphasizes the importance of empathy and a shared sense of outrage in the fight against injustice. Guevara suggests that those who are truly committed to social change are united by their ability to feel deeply and passionately about the suffering of others. This quote serves as a rallying cry for comradeship and solidarity, reminding us that our shared indignation can fuel our collective efforts to create a more just and equitable world.

**Let the world change you and you can change the world**  
**<<< Che Guevara**

This line emphasizes the importance of being open to change and embracing the transformative power of the world around us. It suggests that by allowing ourselves to be influenced and shaped by our experiences, we have the potential to make a significant impact on the world. By remaining receptive to new ideas, perspectives, and opportunities, we can grow and evolve, ultimately becoming agents of positive change in our communities and beyond.



Above all, try always to be able to feel deeply any injustice committed against any person in any part of the world. It is the most beautiful quality of a revolutionary. <<< Che Guevara

This quote emphasizes the significance of cultivating empathy and compassion towards all individuals, regardless of their background or location. It suggests that the ability to deeply feel and understand the injustices faced by others is a fundamental characteristic of a revolutionary. By acknowledging and empathizing with the suffering of others, we are motivated to take action and work towards creating a more just and equitable world. This quote highlights the importance of standing up against injustice and fighting for the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their circumstances.

Every day People straighten up the hair, why not the heart? <<< Che Guevara

Guevara offers a thought-provoking reflection on the importance of self-care and inner transformation. This quote draws attention to the common practice of taking care of our external appearance, such as straightening our hair, while neglecting the well-being of our hearts and inner selves. Guevara's words serve as a reminder that true fulfillment and happiness come from nurturing our inner selves and cultivating a compassionate and loving heart. It encourages us to prioritize self-reflection, emotional well-being, and personal growth in our daily lives.

In conclusion, the words of Che Guevara serve as a constant reminder that change is possible, and it starts with each and every one of us. These top 10 quotes encapsulate the spirit of revolution and social justice, urging us to challenge the status quo and fight for a more equitable world. They inspire us to question the systems of power and take action to create positive change. Let these words ignite a fire within you and motivate you to be an agent of revolution in your own life and in the world around you. Together, we can make a difference and build a better future for all.

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## Che Guevara Mausoleum

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che\\_Guevara\\_Mausoleum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che_Guevara_Mausoleum)

### Che Guevara Mausoleum

Conjunto Escultórico Memorial  
Comandante Ernesto Che Guevara



Che Guevara Monument and Mausoleum



[Wikimedia](#) | © [OpenStreetMap](#)

**Location**  [Santa Clara, Cuba](#)

**Coordinates**  [22°24'8"N 79°58'46"W](#)

**Type** [National monument](#), [memorial](#) and [museum](#)

**Owner** Cuban Government

The **Che Guevara Mausoleum** ([Spanish](#): *Mausoleo del Che Guevara*, officially *Conjunto Escultórico Memorial Comandante Ernesto Che Guevara*) is a [memorial](#) in [Santa Clara, Cuba](#), located in "Plaza Che Guevara" (Che Guevara Square). It houses the remains of the revolutionary [Ernesto "Che" Guevara](#) and 29 fellow combatants killed in 1967 during Guevara's [attempt to spur an armed uprising](#) in [Bolivia](#). The full area, which contains a bronze 22-foot statue of Guevara, is referred to as the Ernesto Guevara Sculptural Complex.

## History

### Historical overview

Guevara was buried with full military honors on 17 October 1997 after his remains were discovered in Bolivia, exhumed and returned to Cuba. At the site, there is a museum dedicated to Guevara's life and an [eternal flame](#) lit by [Fidel Castro](#) in his memory.

Santa Clara was chosen as the location in remembrance of Guevara's troops taking the city on December 31, 1958, during the [Battle of Santa Clara](#). The result of this final battle of the [Cuban Revolution](#) was Cuban dictator [Fulgencio Batista](#) fleeing into exile.

Nearby, in another part of the city, a Fulgencio Batista military supply train derailed by Guevara during the battle also remains in its original location.

### Return of remains

In October 1997, Guevara's remains, and those of six revolutionaries who died with him in Bolivia, arrived in a motorcade from [Havana](#) in small wooden caskets aboard trailers towed by green jeeps.<sup>[3]</sup> As the remains were unloaded before a crowd of several hundred thousand people, a choir of schoolchildren sang [Carlos Puebla's](#) [elegy](#) to Guevara, "[Hasta Siempre](#)" (Until Forever) and then Fidel Castro declared the following:

Why did they think that by killing him, he would cease to exist as a fighter? Today he is in every place, wherever there is a just cause to defend. His unerasable mark is now in history and his luminous gaze of a prophet has become a symbol for all the poor of this world.

His speech was followed by a coordinated [21-gun salute](#) in both Santa Clara and Havana, while air raid sirens were set off across the length of the island.

In addition to those of Che Guevara the remains of six other guerrillas who lost their lives in the [1966–1967 Bolivian Insurgency](#) were also entombed in the mausoleum on October 17, 1997:

- Carlos Coello (Tuma) – Cuban, killed in action at Rio Piraí on June 26, 1967.
- Alberto Fernandez Montes de Oca (Pacho) – Cuban, killed in action at Quebrada del Yuro on October 8, 1967.

- Orlando Pantoja Tamayo (Olo) – Cuban, killed in action at Quebrada del Yuro on October 8, 1967.
- René Martínez Tamayo (Arturo) – Cuban, killed in action at Quebrada del Yuro on October 8, 1967.
- Juan Pablo Navarro-Lévano Chang (El Chino) – Peruvian, captured and executed in [La Higuera](#) on October 9, 1967.
- [Simeon Cuba Sarabia](#) (Willy) – Bolivian, captured and executed in [La Higuera](#) on October 9, 1967.

### **Monument**

A visit to his memorial, just outside the town of Villa Clara, is a fascinating study in both history and passion. Regardless of your political views or your opinion of the man himself, a tour of Che's possessions and the photographic chronicle of his life will offer a rare glimpse into one of the world's longest-standing love affairs between a leader and his people.

— *Liz Fleming, Northern Life reporter*

Work on the complex began in 1982, and it was inaugurated upon completion on December 28, 1988 with [Raúl Castro](#) in attendance. The project was conceived by architects Jorge Cao Campos, Blanca Hernández and José Ramón Linares; along with sculptors and José de Lázaro Bencomo and José Delarra (its prime creator). Additionally 500,000 Santa Clara residents contributed more than 400,000 hours of volunteer work in the construction of the sculptural complex, who worked in unison with skilled artisans of the Eliseo Díaz Machado Foundry in [Guanabacoa](#).

Many different aspects of Guevara's life are represented throughout the complex. For example, his time in Guatemala and at the United Nations is sculpted, while his farewell letter to Fidel is inscribed in full. The adjacent decorative wall depicts him in the Sierra Maestra consulting with Fidel, beside [Camilo Cienfuegos](#), and in the mountains on horseback. Another section shows Guevara as Minister of Industry performing his usual voluntary work. Lastly literacy tutors, children in schools, and young pioneers are depicted issuing the daily salute that all Cuban children recite each morning "We will be like Che."

The structural complex rests on a rolling hilltop overlooking the city of Santa Clara, and contains a large tiled plaza. At the end of the plaza are two large billboards with quotes by Fidel Castro declaring "Che - it was a star that put you here and made you of this people", and "We want everyone to be like Che."

Carved in stone underneath the statue is the well known declaration by Guevara that "One thing I learned in the [Guatemala](#) of [Arbenz](#) was that if I would be a revolutionary doctor, or just a revolutionary, first there must be a revolution."

## Symbolism

"I used very pure geometrical elements - rectangles and squares - representing Che's persona, very steady, very strong."

— *José Delarra, Cuban sculptor and memorial creator*

A number of elements of the memorial contain a symbolic meaning. For instance, the monument is oriented 190 degrees pointing Che's figure directly towards [South America](#), reflecting his focus and outlook for one united [Latin America](#). Additionally, the 22 foot bronze statue of Che has him carrying his gun rather than aiming, symbolizing that he is "continuing onward". The sling which Guevara wore during the battle, the result of an earlier broken arm, is also etched into the statue but he is not wearing the sling to symbolize "a part of his personality, a man rebelling even against himself." At the base of the memorial is Guevara's motto, "*Hasta la Victoria Siempre*" (Until the Eternal Victory).

## Visitor totals

From October 1997 to October 2009 over 3 million people visited the memorial site from over 100 countries.

In 2008, more than 247,700 Cubans and foreigners visited the sculptural complex.

## Additional interments at the site

Between 1997 and 2000 ongoing efforts by [forensic anthropologists](#) operating in southeast Bolivia yielded the recovery of 23 additional sets of remains belonging to other guerrillas who had perished during the [Bolivian Insurgency](#). All of these were subsequently transferred to Cuba where they too were interred in the Che Guevara Mausoleum. The first of these burials took place on December 29, 1998, the 40th anniversary of Guevara's victory in the [Battle of Santa Clara](#), and consisted of 10 separate sets of remains:

- [Haydée Tamara Bunke Bider](#) (Tania)- Argentine-East German, killed in action at Vado del Yeso on August 31, 1967.
- Manuel Hernández Osorio (Miguel)- Cuban, killed in action at Quebrada de Batán on September 26, 1967.
- Mario Gutiérrez Ardaya (Julio)- Bolivian, killed in action at Quebrada de Batán on September 26, 1967.
- Roberto Peredo Leigue (Coco)- Bolivian, killed in action at Quebrada de Batán on September 26, 1967.
- Aniceto Reinaga Cordillo (Aniceto)- Bolivian, killed in action at Quebrada del Yuro on October 8, 1967.
- Francisco Huanca Flores (Pablito)- Bolivian, killed in action at Los Cajones on October 12, 1967.



- Garvan Edilberto Lucio Hidalgo (Eustace)- Peruvian, killed in action at Los Cajones on October 12, 1967.
- Jaime Arana Campero (Chapaco)- Bolivian, killed in action at Los Cajones on October 12, 1967.
- Octavio de la Concepcion Pedraja (Moro)- Cuban, killed in action at Los Cajones on October 12, 1967.
- Julio César Méndez Korné (Nato)- Bolivian, shot by fellow guerrillas after being gravely wounded in Mataral on November 15, 1967.

A second series of burials was carried out on October 8, 1999 in which the remains of 7 more guerillas recovered in Bolivia were placed in the mausoleum:

- Apolinar Aguirre Quispe (Polo)-Bolivian, killed in action at Vado del Yeso on August 31, 1967.
- Freddy Maymura (also Maemura) Hurtado ([ja](#)) (Ernesto)- Bolivian, captured and executed at Vado del Yeso on August 31, 1967.
- Gustavo Manchín Hoed de Beche (Alejandro)- Cuban, killed in action at Vado del Yeso on August 31, 1967.
- Israel Reyes Sayas (Braulio)- Cuban, killed in action at Vado del Yeso on August 31, 1967.
- Juan Vitalio Acuña Nuñez (Joaquin)- Cuban, killed in action at Vado del Yeso on August 31, 1967.
- Moises Guevara Rodriguez (Moses)- Bolivian, killed in action at Vado del Yeso on August 31, 1967.
- Walter Arencibia Ayala (Abel)- Bolivian, killed in action at Vado del Yeso on August 31, 1967.

A final round of 6 interments took place exactly one year later on October 8, 2000 bringing the total number of guerrillas entombed at the site to 30:

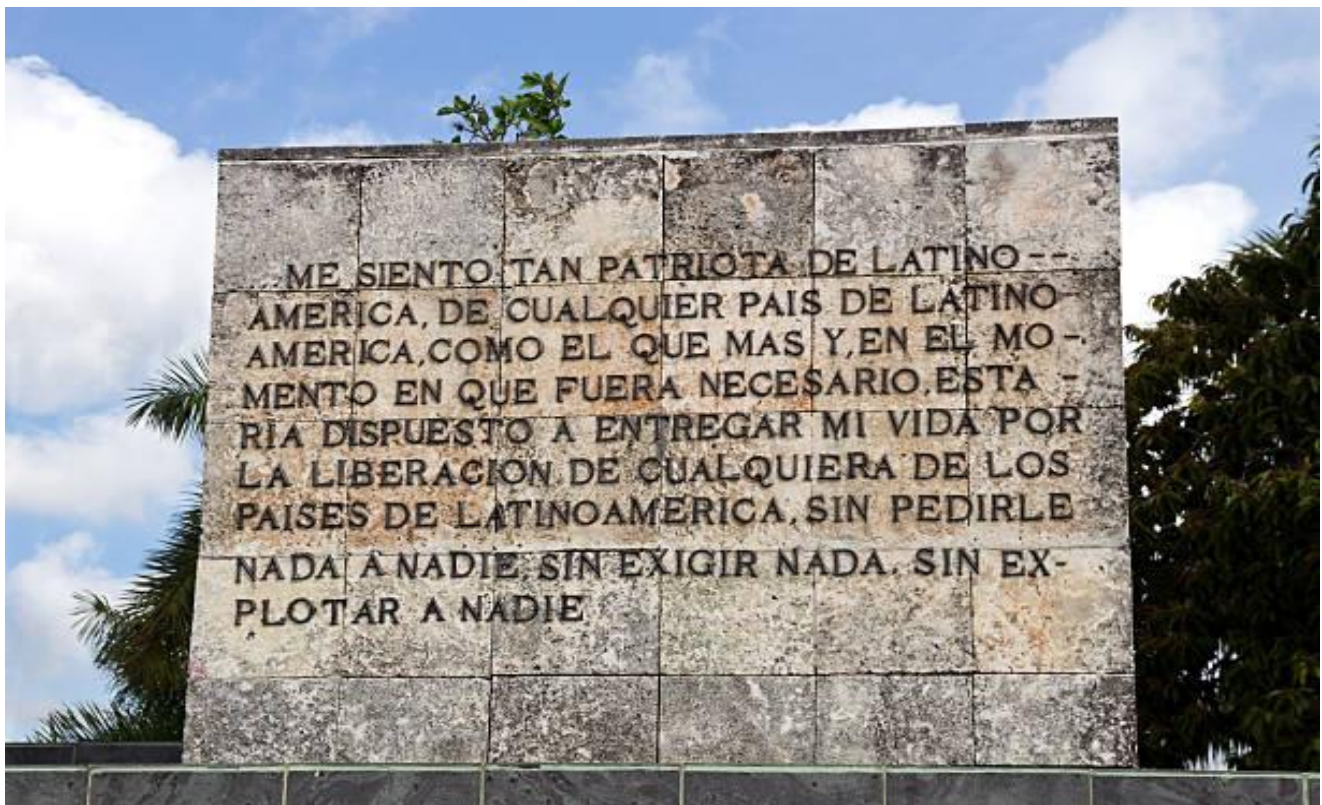
- Eliseo Reyes Rodriguez (Rolando)- Cuban, killed in action at El Meson on April 25, 1967.
- Antonio Sanchez Diaz (Marcos)- Cuban, killed in action at Peña Colorada on June 2, 1967.
- Serapio Aquino Tudela (Serafin)- Bolivian, killed in action at Iquira on July 9, 1967.
- Condori Casildo Varga (Victor)- Bolivian, killed in action at Rio Rosita on July 30, 1967.
- Jose Maria Martinez Tamayo (Papi)- Cuban, killed in action at Rio Rosita on July 30, 1967.
- Restituto José Cabrera Flores (El Negro)-Peruvian, captured and executed in Rio Palmarito on September 4, 1967.

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Santa Clara - Che Guevara writing, Mausoleum Complex



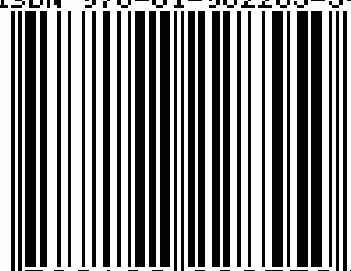








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